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AT the Anniversary Meeting held on the 24th May, 1841, the President presented the Gold Medals, awarded respectively to Lieut. H. RAPER, R.N., and Lieut. J. WOOD, I.N., in the following words.

“Lieut. RAPER,—In compliance with an unanimous resolution of the Council I beg to place in your hands the highest tribute to merit which they have it in their power to bestow. This Work on the ‘Practice of Navigation, and Nautical Astronomy,’ for which the Royal Medal has been awarded to you, indicates in the opinion of the Council a mind naturally powerful, highly cultivated, whose energy has been directed, during many successive years, steadily and without distraction to the attainment of a single object. Your ambition has been to perfect the art of navigation, to remove whatever it contained of empiricism, to lop off its redundancies, to adapt its laws to the dullest comprehensions, and to lay down principles worthy to guide the highest intelligence.

Of those who only follow the Rules, or employ the Tables contained in this volume, no mental effort is required: such persons may read off without hesitation the sign annexed to any correction and comprehend at once what to reserve, what to add, what to subtract; the meaning is clear, the precepts are obvious, and cases hitherto considered complex and involved they will find brought down to the level of the simplest canon.

But the Methods recommended in this work are not only simplified, but often original: as an instance of this it may be sufficient to notice the special Transverse table, so contrived that it bears to spherical the same relation which the ordinary transverse table bears to plane trigonometry. Among the several uses to which the table is applicable, I may cite as one of the most striking, the ready determination of a ship’s true course upon a great circle, and the geographic measurement of large tracts of country without the cumbrous machinery of logarithms.

The Formulæ for estimating in observations made under varying circumstances the probable limits of error, form another peculiarity of your work. It is no slight advantage to the mariner or traveller that he is enabled to ascertain immediately and correctly the amount of credit his observations deserve.

Another Table requiring special notice is that of Maritime Positions, no servile copy of former tables bearing that name, but an original composition derived from a critical investigation of authorities, and founded upon principles which you, Sir, had already laid down at an earlier period in an admirable series of papers in the ‘Nautical Magazine.’ In those papers you discussed the amount of dependence to which different classes of observations are entitled; you pointed out by what gross errors they are not unfrequently polluted; and inculcated the necessity of adopting for different parts of the globe a certain number of what may be denominated secondary meridians. From these you selected as many as your object required, and earnestly recommended all geographers and all travellers whether by land or sea to refer to one or other of the meridians so selected (eighteen in number) the

chronometric differences of longitude hitherto referred exclusively to the prime meridian of Greenwich.

Such are the leading features of the work before me ; such the merits which the Council have felt it imperative upon them to acknowledge and reward. Let it not be said (I am sure it will not be said in disparagement of their adjudication) that it is premature—that the work, however admirable, is incomplete. It is perfectly true that the second volume, embracing the whole theory of navigation, is still in embryo : but I cannot persuade myself that any member of the Society will attach more importance than the Council have done to this remark. When in the course which you have already run, it had been satisfactorily shown that you had surpassed every other competitor, the Council did not consider themselves justified in withholding from you the prize for another year in the hope that within that period you would surpass yourself. Far from discovering in this anticipation of future excellence an excuse for delay, we have on the contrary found in it a reason for despatch : it appeared to us that what justice authorized policy commanded, and that we were called upon by the earliest application of all the encouragement we could offer to stimulate you to proceed with unfaltering energy in the path you have chosen, and which can hardly fail to lead to greater results.”

Lieut. Raper, in reply, said :—

“Sir,—I receive this medal with great gratification, and am the more sensible of the distinction, as it has been bestowed upon an unfinished work. I trust that I need not occupy the time of the meeting with expressions of the pleasure which this occasion affords me ; I can only assure them that the honour conferred on my work will render me doubly vigilant in completing that part of it which is yet in progress, in order that it may be as little undeserving as possible of the prominent position which they have assigned to it, and also of the encomiums which you have been so good, Sir, as to add to the recommendation of the Council. I will not trespass upon you any further than to observe, that whatever satisfaction an author may derive from conceiving that he has directed his efforts to purposes of utility, or to the advantage of any section of the community, he can have none higher than to find that his labours have obtained the approbation of those to whom the world naturally looks as judges on such questions.”

The President then addressed the meeting in the following words, after which, the medal was presented to Sir CHARLES MALCOLM, for Lieut. WOOD, I.N.

“Gentlemen,—It has been already announced to you that one of the medals, which, by command of her gracious Majesty, the Council appropriates annually to the furtherance of geographical science and discovery, has been this year awarded to Lieut. Wood.

Starting into active life at a period when it was thought necessary to reopen between the eastern and western possessions of Great Britain a channel of communication which barbarism had closed during many successive centuries, it was the good fortune of this officer to command the first steam-boat that ever navigated the waters of the Indus.

Being commissioned to examine the periodical rise and fall of the Indus at Haiderabad, the duty was performed by Lieut. Wood in a manner so satisfactory that he had the honour of being appointed soon afterwards to accompany Sir Alexander Burnes on a commercial mission to Afghanistan. While holding that appointment, he undertook a survey of the Indus from its mouth (which had been already mapped with great accuracy by Lieut. Carless) to Attak, a course of 900 miles. As he approached Kalá-bágh, where the river escapes through a mountain-pass in the salt range, his difficulties increased till they became what by an ordinary mind might have been deemed insurmountable; to his they suggested no other necessity but that of prosecuting his object in a different way. Discharging his boat he proceeded by forced marches to Attak, the assigned terminus of his labours, embarked again, and steering cautiously amid falls and rapids, down that part of the stream which to ascend was impracticable, by skill, courage, and perseverance, accomplished to the fullest extent his arduous investigation. At Kábul he began to construct a map of the Afghán province of Kóh-Dáman; * while so employed he was ordered off to Turkistán, and having been foiled in attempting to penetrate an unexplored mountain-pass, arrived at Kunduz by the ordinary route. The only prospect which now opened to him was that of passing the winter months in inglorious ease; but mindful of an observation, made to him on a former occasion by Sir Alexander Burnes, that it was practicable to combine with the correct discharge of professional duties the advancement of general knowledge, he spurned a life of inactivity, and undaunted by the extreme rigour of the season, and the inhospitable nature of the country which it would be necessary for him to traverse, gained permission from Murád Beg, the ruler of the country, to explore the hidden source of the Oxus: and here again he was successful. In such expeditions success is not an unfair criterion of merit, for in trying circumstances fortune rarely favours the undeserving.

Mr. Wood's Survey of the Indus is a masterly work, and will require but few additions or corrections. His account of the upper Oxus is confessedly very imperfect, but the imperfection arises from circumstances unconnected with his character, and beyond his control; the achievements of travellers must ever be bounded more or less by their opportunities; the first step is rarely the easiest, nor is gratitude less due to him who sows the seed than to him who gathers in the harvest.

The value of the medals given by the Council we are aware depends in no slight degree on the justice and impartiality with which they are awarded, but the choice among different descriptions of merit is always embarrassing. In their conscientious endeavour to fulfil the intentions of the royal donors, the Council have more than once considered themselves not only authorized but called upon to take into account circumstances which, if the 'Detur digniori' were the only rule of action, ought to be disregarded. Our duty is not so much to reward merit, as through the medium of reward to advance geographical science and discovery. The Council, in worthily conferring upon Lieut. Wood

* Or Dámání Kóh, i.e. mountain skirt.

this medal, have therefore not deemed it necessary to shut their eyes to the important benefits which have been rendered to geography by that branch of the Indian service to which he has the honour to belong ; still less have they concealed from themselves the consideration that he is yet happily in the prime of life, when a grateful recognition of his past services may naturally be expected to increase his ardour in geographical pursuits, and urge him on to new investigations.

I regret that Lieut. Wood is not present. He is moving about, I hear, in the north of Scotland, and may perhaps be yet unconscious of the honour that awaits him. Under these circumstances Sir Charles Malcolm will do me the favour to accept the medal in trust to transfer it by the first opportunity to its right owner. It will be to an officer of the Indian navy an additional gratification to receive it from his hands.

*"Scilicet ingeniis aliqua est concordia junctis
Et servat studii fœdera quisque sui."*

Sir CHARLES MALCOLM, in reply, said :—

"Sir,—My young friend, Lieut. Wood, will ever regret that he was not present this evening to receive personally from your hands this mark of the approbation of the Royal Geographical Society. This honourable reward now conferred upon him for the talent, zeal, and perseverance which he has displayed, and which you have been pleased to notice in such a just and gratifying manner, will be to him a recompense for all the labour he has undergone in his successful and arduous undertaking. It will afford me most sincere pleasure to convey to him this medal."
